

POSTPONING VOTES DURING CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2099, DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1996

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that during the consideration of H.R. 2099 pursuant to the provisions of House Resolution 201, the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may postpone until a time during further consideration in the Committee of the Whole a request for a recorded vote on any amendment, and that the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may reduce to not less than 5 minutes the time for voting by electronic device on any postponed question that immediately follows another vote by electronic device without intervening business, provided that the time for voting by electronic device on the first in any series of questions shall not be less than 15 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I would mention that we have a gap in time today of 2 hours between 2 and 4 when Members want to go to the Korean Memorial ceremonies.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

Mr. STOKES. Reserving the right to object, Mr. Speaker, I would like to get further clarification with respect to rolling the amendments. If we can agree that not more than three or four would be rolled at a time, I do not think there would be any problem at all from our side.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. STOKES. Further reserving the right to object, I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, there is no problem with that on this side at all. I expect that we may have a series of amendments, five or six or seven, some of which will not request votes, and if there are three or four, I think that is very workable.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

Mr. MINETA. Reserving the right to object, Mr. Speaker, I would like to inquire of the gentleman from California. A number of us who are Korean war veterans would like to be going down to the dedication of the Korean War Veterans Memorial dedication.

There was some thought that maybe between the hours of 2 and 4 that there may be some opportunity so that some of us may be able to get away for the dedication of the Korean War Veterans Memorial. I would hope that we would be able to cluster some of those votes outside that 2 to 4.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MINETA. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for raising the question. We mentioned it earlier. It is very important that Members know that we will be trying to structure votes so that there will be free time between 2 and 4 for the Korean Memorial ceremony.

Mr. MINETA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the bill, H.R. 2099, and that I be permitted to include tables, charts, and other extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1996

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 201 and rule XXIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 2099.

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IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 2099) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1996, and for other purposes, with Mr. COMBEST in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered as having been read the first time.

Under the rule, the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] and the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] will each be recognized for 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS].

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, colleagues, I am pleased to present H.R. 2099—the VA, HUD, and independent agencies appropriations bill for fiscal 1996. Let me get right to the bottom line. This bill, as it now stands, provides \$60.045 in discretionary budget authority and \$19.361

billion for mandatory accounts. This represents an overall reduction of \$10.006 billion—or minus 14.3 percent—in domestic discretionary authority from last year's levels. It is \$10.482 billion less than President Clinton requested for the 22 agencies, boards, and commissions that fall within the subcommittee's jurisdiction.

Following directly from our recent success in the rescissions package, this bill represents the urgent need to put Uncle Sam on a diet. We are doing what many said could never be done. We are making the tough decisions required to balance the Federal budget in 7 years. The bill reflects real cuts in each and every agency, except the VA's medical care account. These cuts, in this bill, at this time, are absolutely required if we are to keep our commitment to the American people regarding changing the way their Government in Washington operates with their hard earned tax dollars. We do not have the luxury of postponing these decisions to the outyears. We have tightened Uncle Sam's belt a notch or two, but this is the beginning, not the end, of identifying real savings.

At this point, I want to move away from the numbers for just a moment in order to share a few observations about the many people who have made it possible for the subcommittee to bring this bill to the floor today. I know that you will understand when I say this—the chairmanship of the VA-HUD subcommittee is not a lonely job. The Members should know how fortunate I feel to be working so directly with Mr. STOKES of Ohio who chaired the subcommittee in the 103d Congress.

Mr. STOKES is much more than a friend. Time and again, he has been someone on whom I can absolutely count when it comes to understanding the impact of the fundamental changes which we are making. The gentleman from Ohio never stops listening or working with me regardless of how much he may disagree with the substance of any matter under negotiation. And we appreciate the help we get from his able staff—particularly Leslie Atkinson and Del Davis.

Throughout our hearings this year as the subcommittee developed the bill, I encountered reactions ranging from amazement to amusement among our subcommittee's 11 other members. But I have always known that I could count on each and every one of those members to work with me to improve the direction, substance, and purpose of this bill. Indeed, it is a very special privilege to work on such a close basis with all who serve on the VA-HUD subcommittee. To a person, they are men and women of uncommon intelligence and conviction. This bill reflects their bipartisan participation and cooperation.

Last, I want to say how much I value and appreciate the work of the staff. With the exception of Paul Thomson who has long worked with us on appropriations matters, ours is a brand new